



Amarnath Yatra: Security beefed up across J&K

Mock drills, anti-sabotage checks, multi-agency exercises intensified, 63 officers deployed to support yatra administration

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 16: Authorities have beefed up security across Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra, with multi-layered arrangements, mock drills and coordinated exercises being carried out to ensure the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) security forces, police and civil administration have activated a comprehensive security grid covering transit routes, base camps, railway infrastructure, lodgement centres and other critical installations linked to the pilgrimage, scheduled to begin early next month.

An official said, "In Anantnag district, police have strengthened security measures along the traditional Pahalgam route. Specialised teams are carrying out anti-sabotage checks, area domination exercises and sanitisation drives from Khanabal to Pahalgam, covering transit



points, parking areas, accommodation centres and vulnerable locations."

"The operations are being supported by bomb disposal squads, sniffer dog units and technical surveillance teams," he added.

"Security personnel are also conducting inspections of vehicles, including abandoned and unattended vehicles, while surveillance has been enhanced

in forest areas and along key stretches of the pilgrimage route," the official said.

Authorities, he said, have also introduced QR code-based verification for service providers associated with the yatra, including pony operators and other workers, to strengthen identification and monitoring mechanisms.

"As part of broader preparedness efforts, | More on P6

Comprehensive arrangements in place for Yatra: Dr Jitendra



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Stating that the administration has made comprehensive arrangements for the Amarnath Yatra 2026, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Tuesday said that the annual pilgrimage will be conducted smoothly and successfully.

Talking to reporters here, Singh, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that security and logistical preparations | More on P6

Focus on large-scale housing projects, improve parking facilities: CM Omar

Chairs 84th Board of Directors meeting of Srinagar Development Authority

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 16: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired the 84th meeting of the Board of Directors of the Srinagar Development Authority (SDA) here at the Civil Secretariat.

The meeting reviewed the implementation status of decisions taken in the previous Board meeting and considered a range of issues relating to urban infrastructure development, housing, organizational reforms, land management and progress in execution of various projects by the Authority.

The Board took note of the action taken report on decisions of the previous meeting, including | More on P6

Omar lays foundation stones for two major sewerage infra projects



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 16: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday laid the foundation stones for two major sewerage infrastructure projects in Srinagar

aimed at strengthening wastewater treatment facilities and improving urban sanitation in the city.

The projects include the augmentation and upgradation of the 17.08 MLD capacity | More on P6

CM discusses dev issues with legislators

KT News Desk

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday met several public

representatives at the Civil Secretariat here and listened to their concerns, suggestions and issues requiring government attention. The Chief Minister

met Legislators Iftikhar Ahmad (Rajouri), Rafiq Ahmad Naik (Tral), Justice (Retd.) Hasnain Masoodi (Pampore), Javed Reyaz Bedar | More on P6

J&K to sign MoU with Centre for Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

Cabinet clears proposal

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jun 16: The Jammu and Kashmir government is set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Jal Shakti for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0.

Sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Union Territory's cabinet has cleared the proposal through circulation, paving the way for J&K to join the second phase of the flagship scheme.

"The cabinet has approved the MoU," Minister for Jal Shakti, Javid Rana, told KNO. He added that a meeting scheduled in New Delhi on June 18. "Let us see what happens," he said.

The signing of MoUs is one of the four mandatory requirements for states and Union Territories to avail central funds under JJM 2.0. The other requirements include: creation of Sujal Gaon IDs to ensure complete digital mapping of all rural water supply schemes, timely financial reconciliation, and notification of operation and maintenance (O&M) policies.

In March 2026, the Union Cabinet approved the Ministry of Jal Shakti's proposal to restructure and reorient the implementation of | More on P6

Peace boosts tourism along LoC areas in Kashmir

Army launch platforms to promote frontier destinations, strengthen visitor economy



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 16: Once known for cross-border shelling and insecurity, villages along the Line of Control (LoC) in North Kashmir are witnessing a tourism boom.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) destinations such as Keran, Machil, Teetwal, Tangdhar, Gurez and Bangus Valley are emerging as major attractions.

Situated on the banks of the Kishenganga river in Kupwara district, Keran has become one of the most visited border destinations in Kashmir. The river forms the LoC between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), offering visitors a rare glimpse of

life across the border.

Tourists can often be seen gathering along the riverbanks, exchanging waves with people on the opposite side and enjoying the scenic landscape of forests, mountains and flowing streams.

The surge in tourist arrivals has opened new economic opportunities for local residents, many of whom have converted their homes into homestays and tourism facilities.

"We have learned from established tourist destinations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam. People have decorated their homes, prepared homestays and even arranged horse rides for visitors to explore nearby scenic areas," said Suhail Ahmad, a homestay owner in Keran.

He said tourism has become a major source | More on P6

Health Ministry amends Drugs Rules, 1945

Over-the-counter sale of syrups discontinued to curb misuse Doctor's prescription now mandatory for purchase of all syrups

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 16: In a significant move aimed at strengthening drug regulation and promoting the rational use of medicines, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has notified an amendment to the Drugs Rules, 1945, making it mandatory for consumers to produce a valid doctor's prescription to purchase all syrups, including cough syrups.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the decision comes through the Drugs (Fifth Amendment) Rules, 2026, notified by the Ministry on June 9, 2026, and has come into force with immediate effect following its publication in the Official Gazette.

According to the notification, the government has amended Schedule K of the Drugs Rules, 1945, by removing the word "Syrups" from the list of medicines that were previously exempted from certain provisions governing retail sale. As a result, syrups can no longer be sold over the counter without a prescription.

The amendment follows a public consultation process initiated through a draft notification issued in December



2025. The Centre stated that objections and suggestions received from stakeholders and the public were examined before the final rules were notified after consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board.

Health experts believe the move is intended to curb the growing trend of self-medication and misuse of liquid formulations, particularly cough syrups. In recent years, concerns have been raised over the indiscriminate use of cough syrups containing ingredients that may cause adverse effects when consumed without medical supervision.

Officials said that requiring a prescription would help ensure that patients receive appropriate diagnosis and treatment rather than relying on self-prescribed medicines

for symptoms that could indicate more serious health conditions.

The new rule is also expected to improve monitoring of medicine sales and promote responsible dispensing practices among pharmacists.

With the amendment taking effect, pharmacies across the country will be required to dispense syrups only upon presentation of a valid prescription issued by a registered medical practitioner.

Consumers who previously purchased cough syrups, fever syrups, antibiotic syrups, digestive syrups, and other liquid medications directly from medical stores will now need to consult a doctor before obtaining these medicines.

Pharmacists may face regulatory action if found selling syrups without | More on P6

Rain, thundershowers lash J&K parts

MeT forecasts wet spell till June 22, advises caution near water bodies

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 16: Several parts of Jammu and Kashmir witnessed rain and thundershowers on Tuesday afternoon as the Meteorological Centre Srinagar issued a nowcast warning for brief intense showers, thundershowers, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds across multiple districts.

According to the MeT department, a spell of rain and thundershowers affected Baramulla, Uri, Gulmarg and adjoining areas, besides many parts of Budgam, Poonch and Rajouri districts during the day.

Rainfall activity was also reported from Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag districts in south Kashmir, while parts of Ganderbal, including the Sonamarg-Baltal-Holy Cave axis, and the Pahalgam-Holy Cave route received showers accompanied by thunder and lightning.

In the Jammu region, parts of Ramban, Kishtwar, Reasi, Kathua and Jammu districts experienced rain and thundershowers activity, the weather office said.

The MeT department told the news | More on P6

NEET re-exam: Govt temporarily restricts Telegram; NTA welcomes

Platform access blocked till June 22 | Message-editing feature disabled till June 30 | Authorities target cheating rackets exploiting students

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 16: In a major step aimed at safeguarding the integrity of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination, the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday welcomed the Government of India's decision to impose temporary restrictions on the Telegram messaging platform.

The action, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), comes ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination scheduled for June 21 and follows recommendations made by the NTA and the Department of Higher Education to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

An official statement stated that the access to Telegram in

India has been restricted for a limited period ending June 22, covering the examination day and the immediate post-examination period. In addition, Telegram has been directed to disable its message-editing feature in India until June 30.

The NTA stated that the measures were taken in the interest of public order and to prevent the spread of fraudulent claims related to examination paper leaks.

CRACKDOWN ON EXAM FRAUD NETWORKS

The agency said that over the past several weeks, numerous Telegram channels and groups had been openly advertising purported access to NEET examination papers and demanding money from students and their families.



These channels, operating under names such as "Paper Leaked NEET," "Re-NEET 2026," "Private Mafia," and similar titles, allegedly charged candidates amounts ranging from a few thousand rupees to several lakh rupees by falsely promising access to confidential examination

material.

Reiterating its position, the NTA emphasized that no examination paper exists outside the secure examination chain and that every such claim is fraudulent.

"The promise of obtaining the question paper before the examination is a scam

intended to exploit anxious candidates and their families," the agency stated.

MESSAGE EDITING FEATURE USED TO CREATE FAKE LEAK EVIDENCE

The NTA highlighted another concern involving Telegram's message-editing capability.

According to the agency, channel administrators were able to modify previously posted messages, including replacing attached PDF files, while retaining the original timestamp. Authorities alleged that this feature had been exploited in several examinations to create fabricated evidence of paper leaks.

Investigators found instances where administrators allegedly inserted actual question

papers into older messages after examinations had concluded and then circulated screenshots showing earlier timestamps to falsely suggest that the papers had been leaked beforehand.

Officials said the temporary suspension of the editing feature would help prevent such manipulation during the sensitive post-examination period.

I4C LED NATIONWIDE MONITORING EFFORT

The NTA credited the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs, for spearheading the operational response against online examination fraud.

Acting on intelligence inputs from the NTA, state police agencies, and its own cyber

monitoring mechanisms, I4C coordinated the takedown of numerous Telegram channels, groups, and automated bots that were allegedly engaged in spreading misinformation and running examination-related scams. The agency described the collaboration between I4C, MeitY, and various state law enforcement agencies as the backbone of efforts to contain the activities of cheating networks ahead of the examination.

STATE POLICE INVESTIGATIONS UNCOVER LARGE-SCALE FRAUD

The statement also referred to several enforcement actions undertaken by state police agencies.

The Bihar Police Economic Offences Unit had earlier issued a | More on P6

Union MoS Ajay Tamta reviews J&K highway projects

● Highlights 12 year infrastructure overhaul

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, JUNE 16: Union Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways Ajay Tamta wrapped up a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday after an extensive inspection of key National Highway projects followed by a high-level review meeting held at the Convention Centre, Jammu yesterday.

During the visit, the MoS, as per an official statement, travelled the entire Srinagar-Jammu section of NH-44, inspecting the Qazigund-Banihal and Chenani-Nashri tunnels, the landslide-prone Ramban-Banihal stretch and the ongoing Srinagar and Jammu Ring Road projects being executed by NHAI. He also assessed the Chenani-Sudhmahadev stretch and the proposed Sudhmahadev-Dranga tunnel alignment under NHIDCL.

Senior officers of NHAI, NHIDCL, BRO, PWD and MoRTH accompanied him during the field inspections. The review meeting was attended by Members Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma and Sat Pal Sharma, MLAs Chandra Prakash Ganga, Yudhvir Sethi, Vikram Randhawa, Arvind Gupta and Surendra Bhagat besides senior officials from all highway agencies.

The officials briefed the Minister on the progress of ongoing and upcoming works funded by MoRTH, covering projects being executed by NHAI, NHIDCL, BRO and PWD across the Union Territory.

Highlighting the shift since 2014, Ajay Tamta



said that Jammu and Kashmir has undergone an "unprecedented transformation" in road and transport infrastructure. Before 2014, highway development in the region was limited, with difficult terrain, frequent landslides and poor all-weather connectivity. Since then, works worth nearly ₹1.35 lakh crore have been taken up. Of this, 700 km worth ₹20,000 crore have been completed, 2,300 km worth ₹50,000 crore are under construction and DPRs for another 707 km worth ₹65,000 crore are being prepared.

He said that tunnel construction has been a major focus and only five tunnels existed in J&K

before 2014. Tuesday, the Jammu-Srinagar corridor alone has 25 tunnels with 20 completed and five under construction, he added. Strategic projects such as the Zojila Tunnel, Digdol-Khoo-ni Nallah, Sungal, Bhimber Gali, Sinthan Pass, Sudhmahadev, Sadhna Pass, Peer Ki Gali and the parallel Chenani-Nashri alignment are expected to ensure reliable, year-round connectivity.

The meeting was informed that ₹16,000-crore Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar four-lane corridor has achieved 95 percent progress. Once complete, it will cut the travel time between Jammu and Srinagar from nine hours to about four hours

and reduce the distance by nearly 70 km. Tunnels, viaducts, bypasses and landslide protection measures are turning the NH-44 into a safer all-weather route. To further strengthen resilience, works worth ₹230 crore are being taken up at 15 vulnerable locations between Udhampur and Banihal, while bypasses worth ₹600 crore have already been completed at Banihal, Ramban, Ashajipora, Seri and Makarkote.

Four high-speed corridors worth ₹50,000 crore including Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar, Jammu-Chenani-Anantnag, Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri and Jammu-Akhnor are under construction. These will improve the access to the Kashmir Valley, Chenab Valley, Rajouri-Poonch, North Kashmir and key border areas, aiding the tourism, trade and defence mobility. The 670-km Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Greenfield Expressway, costing ₹41,000 crore, will also strengthen the pilgrimage connectivity. Within J&K, 143 km of the expressway worth ₹11,500 crore is slated for completion by August 2027, reducing Delhi-Katra distance by 58 km.

The meeting was further told that the urban mobility is being addressed through ring roads. The 104-km Srinagar Ring Road, costing ₹7,200 crore, will divert through traffic from the city and improve links to Baramulla, Kupwara, Banihal, Gurez, Kargil and Leh. The 58-km Jammu Ring Road is nearing completion with 53 km already operational while DPR work is underway for the 33-km Eastern Jammu Ring Road. The next phase includes DPRs for 707 km of

highways worth ₹65,000 crore. Key upcoming projects are the 125-km Katra-Srinagar High-Speed Corridor, the Rafiabab-Kupwara-Tangdhar route with Sadhna Tunnel, the Surankote-Bufliaz-Doodhpathri-Magam corridor with Peer Ki Gali Tunnel, Samba-Mansar-Udhampur four-laning, Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri corridor and new service roads and underpasses on the Srinagar-Qazigund stretch. It was informed in the meeting that Pilgrimage and tourism infrastructure has also received attention. DPRs are being prepared for 60 km of Amarnath Yatra road works worth ₹3,500 crore. The ₹880-crore Katra Intermodal Station will integrate rail, road and heli-services for devotees visiting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Additionally, 54 ropeway proposals worth ₹30,000 crore have been received, with eight projects worth ₹16,000 crore to be taken up in the first phase at sites including Shri Amarnath Ji Cave, Shankaracharya Temple, Thajiwag Glacier, Bhardarwah, Sanasar and Doodhpathri.

The MoS appreciated the work of all agencies and directed the officials to complete the projects within stipulated timelines while maintaining quality, safety and public convenience. He said the infrastructure push of the last 12 years has moved Jammu and Kashmir "from difficult and disrupted connectivity to modern, all-weather, high-speed and integrated transport." The projects, he added, will boost tourism, pilgrimage, industry, defence logistics and overall socio-economic growth in the Union Territory.

Govt committed to preservation of Kashmir's houseboat heritage: Javed Rana

Delegation, led by Chairman AKHBOA, Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon, apprised Minister of issues like requirement of timber for repair, renovation, maintenance

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 16: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Tuesday said that the government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is committed towards protecting and preserving the treasured houseboat heritage of Kashmir.

He made these remarks during a meeting with the All Kashmir Houseboat Owners Association (AKHBOA) held at Civil Secretariat Srinagar.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was also attended by MLA Zaidal constituency, Tanveer Sadiq.

Rana said that the houseboat remains a symbol of the Valley's cultural identity and a vital pillar of its tourism economy and every effort will be made



for welfare of the communities dependent on it.

The delegation, led by Chairman AKHBOA, Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon, apprised the Minister of various issues concerning the houseboat sector, particularly the requirement of timber for repair, renovation and maintenance of these heritage structures.

The representatives underscored that

houseboats constitute a unique heritage asset of Jammu and Kashmir and play a significant role in sustaining tourism and providing livelihood to hundreds of families. They requested for enhancement of the existing timber quota to meet maintenance requirements while seeking easier process of timber procurement.

Responding to the

issues raised by the delegation, the Minister assured that the concerns raised would be examined sympathetically for appropriate consideration. He said the government remains committed to safeguard the region's heritage assets while ensuring the welfare of communities dependent on them. The delegation expressed gratitude to the Minister for his positive response to their long-pending demands.

Legislators Ranbir Singh Pathania and Mir Saifullah also called on the Minister and apprised him of various development and public welfare issues pertaining to their respective constituencies.

The Minister assured them that their concerns would be looked into and addressed in a time bound manner.

Income Tax Deptt organises awareness programme on New Income Tax Act, 2025

KT News Desk

Srinagar, June 16: The Income Tax Department Tuesday organised an awareness programme on the New Income Tax Act, 2025 at its Srinagar office as part of a nationwide outreach campaign aimed at promoting simplification and greater understanding of the direct taxation system among taxpayers and stakeholders.

The programme, as per a PIB statement, was hosted by Ms. Monika Dhama, Principal Commissioner of Income Tax, Srinagar, and witnessed enthusiastic participation from taxpayers and representatives of various trade and professional bodies, including the Bar Association, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Cold Storage Association Srinagar and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Srinagar Chapter, among others.

Dr G S Phani Kishore, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Amritsar Region, was the chief guest on the occasion and delivered the keynote address.

In his address, Dr Kishore highlighted the key features and benefits of the New Income Tax Act, 2025, which will come into effect from April 1, 2026. He stated that the new legislation seeks to make the direct tax framework simpler, more accessible and easier for taxpayers to understand by removing procedural complexity, reducing redundant provisions



and consolidating scattered provisions into a more coherent and streamlined structure.

The keynote address was followed by a detailed presentation on the broader changes introduced under the New Income Tax Act, 2025 by Shakil Ahmad Ganig, Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Srinagar.

The participants were also briefed about the "Kar Saathi" chatbot through a presentation delivered by Abhineet Jhorar, Income Tax Officer (ITO). The chatbot, available on the official website of the Income Tax Department, has been designed to assist taxpayers by addressing their queries online and helping them navigate various tax-related processes and services.

Towards the conclusion of the programme, an interactive

open discussion session was held during which participants raised various important issues, including matters relating to Tax Deducted at Source (TDS), the need for greater taxpayer awareness and outreach initiatives, and other practical aspects of tax administration. The queries and concerns raised by the participants were addressed by departmental officers.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks presented by Dr Ruweda Salam, Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Srinagar, who expressed gratitude to all the participants for their active participation and for contributing towards broader awareness and constructive two-way communication between the department and taxpayers.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
SCHOOL EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT (HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT SECTION)
CIVIL SECRETARIAT, JAMMU/SRINAGAR

Subject: Tentative seniority list of PG Masters/ PG Teachers in the discipline of Statistics as on 01.04.2026.

NOTICE

WHEREAS, the final seniority list of PG Masters/ PG Teachers in the discipline of Statistics was issued vide Government Order No. 329-JK(EDU) OF 2023 dated 10.10.2023;

AND WHEREAS, after issuance of the final seniority list, the Department received various objections/representations from cadre members/Directors for correction/inclusion/up-dation of service particulars in the seniority list;

AND WHEREAS, the objections received by the Department have been examined/scrutinized and necessary corrections/additions/deletions etc., wherever required, have been made in the seniority list;

AND WHEREAS, the Designated Committees have recommended 04 incumbents, (Annexure-D) in light of Government Order No. 188-JK(Edu) of 2024 Dated 15.03.2024, who have obtained their PG degrees through distance/private mode during service. The recommendations made in their favour, after examination in the Department, have been accepted by the Competent Authority. These incumbents, some of whom already figured in the tentative seniority list on conditional basis, have now been incorporated in the Tentative seniority list at appropriate places;

AND WHEREAS, some of the incumbents, who have obtained their PG degrees during service and whose cases have not yet been recommended by the Designated Committees constituted vide Government Order No. 188-JK(Edu) of 2024 dated 15.03.2024, have also been incorporated in the seniority list, with the condition that their inclusion in seniority is subject to the condition that proper permission has been/is granted by the Competent Authority for acquiring the PG degree during service. Their names shall be deemed to have been deleted from the seniority list, ab-initio, in case the recommendations are not received in the time frame decided in the ibid Government order;

AND WHEREAS, this has necessitated issuance of an updated seniority list of members of the service.

Now, therefore, tentative seniority list in respect of PG Masters/ PG Teachers in the discipline of Statistics, forming "Annexure-A" to this notice, is hereby circulated for inviting objections, if any, from the concerned members of the service, who either is/are not included in the list or is/are aggrieved with the position assigned to them in the tentative seniority list along with authenticated documentary proof of their service particulars/bio-data, within a period of 15 days from the date of issuance of the list. The objections must be filed/ forwarded through concerned Directorates, so as to reach the Administrative Department of the stipulated time period.

within stipulated time. Further, no objections in this regard shall be entertained after expiry/)

Moreover, 11 incumbents have been included in the tentative seniority list at appropriate places as detailed in "Annexure-B" and "Annexure-C" 11 incumbents have been deleted from the Tentative seniority list as detailed in "Annexure-D" for the reasons as shown against each.

The tentative seniority list is also available on the official website of School Education (<https://schooleducation.jk.gov.in>).

Sd/-
(Ram Niwas Sharma), IAS
Commissioner/Secretary to the Government,
School Education Department.

No. Edu-HRM/137/2022-01 (165337) Dated:15.06.2026. DIPP-2212/26
DATED: 16-06-2026

JAMMU AND KASHMIR PUBLIC
SERVICE COMMISSION
Resham Garh, Jammu (180016)/Solina, Srinagar (190001)
WWW.JKPSC.NIC.IN

Subject: Date Sheet for Prosecuting Officer (G) (Main) Examination.

Notification No. PSC/Exam/2026/12
Dated:-15.06.2026

In continuation of this Office Notice dated 12.05.2026, it is for information of all the concerned eligible candidates that the Prosecuting Officer (G) (Main) Examination, shall be conducted as per following schedule:-

Date/Day	Forenoon Session 10.00 A.M. to 01.00 P.M.
(1)	(2)
15.07.2026 (Wednesday)	(Qualifying Paper) English
16.07.2026 (Thursday)	(Paper-I) Legal drafting and Pleading
17.07.2026 (Friday)	(Paper-II) Constitutional Law
18.07.2026 (Saturday)	(Paper-III) Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
20.07.2026 (Monday)	(Paper-IV) Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023
21.07.2026 (Tuesday)	(Paper-V) Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023
22.07.2026 (Wednesday)	(Paper-VI) Special Laws-I
23.07.2026 (Thursday)	(Paper-VI) Special Laws-II

(Supinder Kour) JKAS,
Under Secretary,
J&K Public Service Commission.

No: PSC/Exam/P.O (Main)/2026/23 Dated:-15.06.2026 DIPP-2186/26
DATED: 16-06-2026

J&K reports improvement in child health indicators: NFHS-6

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Jun 16: Jammu and Kashmir has recorded notable progress in child health-care, with improvements in immunisation coverage, postnatal care, and a reduction in childhood illnesses and malnutrition, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) 2023-24.

The survey, however, raises concerns over a decline in exclusive breastfeeding practices and inadequate nutrition among young children.

Data from NFHS-6 show that postnatal care services have improved significantly in the Union Territory. Around 88.2 per cent of mothers received postnatal care from a doctor, nurse, midwife, or other health professional within two days of delivery, up from 84.2 per cent in NFHS-5 (2019-21).

Similarly, the proportion of newborns receiving postnatal care within two days of birth increased to 88.7 per cent, compared to 81.5 per cent in the previous survey, indicating better access to maternal and newborn healthcare services.

The survey also highlights gains in child



immunisation. Full immunisation coverage among children aged 12-23 months rose to 89.4 per cent from 86.2 per cent in NFHS-5. Among children whose vaccination status was confirmed through immunisation cards,

coverage reached 93.7 per cent. Coverage of individual vaccines also improved. Around 97.5 per cent of children aged 12-23 months received the BCG vaccine, up from 95.1 per cent earlier.

Coverage of three doses of the polio vaccine increased to 90.3 per cent from 87.6 per cent, while three-dose pentavalent vaccine coverage rose to 93.6 per cent from 92.8 per cent.

The first dose of the measles-containing vaccine reached 95 per cent coverage, while the second dose saw a significant rise to 82.4 per cent from 73.6 per cent in NFHS-5. The Hepatitis-B birth dose was administered to 94.1 per cent of eligible children, compared to 88.1 per cent earlier.

Vitamin A supplementation also improved slightly, with 84 per cent of children aged 9-35 months receiving the supplement in the six months preceding the survey, up from 82.3 per cent in the previous round.

The prevalence of common childhood illnesses declined in J&K, with diarrhoea among children under five dropping to 4.1 per cent from 5.6 per cent and acute respiratory infection (ARI) symptoms falling to 2.1 per cent from 3.8 per cent. Healthcare-seeking for children with ARI symptoms improved, with 67.2 per cent being taken to a health provider compared to 62.3 per cent earlier.

However, infant feeding indicators

showed mixed trends. Early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth declined to 52.8 per cent from 55.6 per cent, while exclusive breastfeeding among infants below six months fell to 59.2 per cent from 62 per cent. Continued breastfeeding among children aged 6-23 months improved slightly to 93.8 per cent.

Complementary feeding saw some progress, with 64.7 per cent of children aged 6-8 months receiving solid or semi-solid foods along with breastmilk, up from 41.8 per cent. The proportion of children aged 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet also increased to 18.9 per cent from 12.8 per cent.

The survey also recorded notable improvements in child nutrition. Stunting among children under five declined to 21.4 per cent from 26.9 per cent, wasting dropped to 10.6 per cent from 19 per cent, and severe wasting fell to 4.1 per cent from 9.7 per cent. The proportion of underweight children decreased to 14.5 per cent from 21 per cent, while the prevalence of overweight children remained largely unchanged at 9.2 per cent—(KNO)

CS reviews TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan progress

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 16: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting of the ongoing Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan to assess the progress achieved across the Union Territory and chart out a strategy for accelerating efforts towards tuberculosis elimination.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Health & Medical Education (H&ME); Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM); Managing Director, JKMSCL; Principals of Government Medical Colleges (GMCs); Director, Health Services, Kashmir/Jammu; and Senior Faculty Members from various medical institutions across the UT.

Reviewing district-wise performance, the Chief



Secretary noted that while several districts have achieved encouraging results, there remains considerable scope for improvement in certain critical indicators. He directed the Health & Medical Education Department to intensify efforts in districts reporting lower coverage of X-ray screening, differentiated TB care, TB preventive

treatment and nutritional support.

He emphasized on expanding the coverage achieved in screening populations residing in identified high-risk villages, directing district administrations and health authorities to substantially increase the number of Nikshay Shivirs and ensure saturation coverage of all

notified high-risk villages within the stipulated timelines. He emphasized optimum utilisation of handheld X-ray units and greater outreach in remote and vulnerable areas.

While reviewing the implementation of the Nikshay Poshan Yojana, the Chief Secretary instructed the concerned authorities to

complete all pending beneficiary authentication and ensure timely release of financial assistance to the eligible patients. He further directed that all pending cases be cleared through a special drive so that no patient is deprived of entitled benefits.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.com

Muharram preparations initiated two months in advance: Minister Sharma

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 16: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Satish Sharma on Tuesday said the Jammu and Kashmir government has made elaborate arrangements for the smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram, while appealing to people to uphold communal harmony, brotherhood and unity.

Speaking to reporters here, Sharma said preparations for Muharram were initiated nearly two months in advance, making it one of the earliest and most comprehensive planning exercises undertaken by the government.

He said a high-level review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was recently held with senior officers, stakeholders and legislators to assess preparedness and ensure all necessary facilities are put in place ahead of the religious occasion.

"The government has adequate stocks of essential commodities, including ration and LPG and additional supplies



have also been procured to meet any increased demand," Sharma said.

Addressing concerns regarding drinking water facilities during Muharram, the minister said large Syntex water tanks are being installed at important locations, while water tankers will also remain available to cater to public requirements. "Fire service vehicles will be deployed at key points as a precautionary measure," he added.

Minister Sharma acknowledged challenges related to potholes and road repairs, stating that rising bitumen prices and supply constraints due to the prevailing geopolitical situation have impacted road maintenance works.

"Despite these

challenges, we are making every effort to address road-related issues and improve conditions wherever possible within the available time," he said.

Appealing for unity and brotherhood, Sharma said attempts are often made by divisive forces to create differences among communities, but such efforts must be rejected. "We are one people and must remain united. We believe in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world is one family. External and internal forces trying to divide society should not be allowed to succeed. Our collective responsibility is to strengthen unity and harmony," he said.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.com

Pathania questions NC protest, says statehood already assured

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Jammu, Jun 16: Questioning National Conference's protest on the opening day of monsoon session over the demand of statehood, BJP legislator Ranbir Singh Pathania on Tuesday said the matter has already been committed to by Parliament as well as the country's top leadership.

Pathania termed the proposed programme at Jantar Mantar a "new drama" by the National Conference and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"A new drama, a new theatrics from the side of the National Conference and Omar Abdullah is going to unfold on the issue of statehood in Delhi at Jantar Mantar. I would like to ask how statehood remains an issue when the country's supreme Parliament has committed to it, the Prime Minister is committed, and the Home Minister is committed," he said.

Pathania said that instead of staging protests, the National Conference should explain when it would fulfil the promises

made to the people during elections.

"When will the National Conference fulfil its election guarantees? When will people get free electricity, free travel, free gas cylinders and one lakh jobs?" he asked.

Stating that he has respect for Omar Abdullah, Pathania said the Chief Minister should focus on changing the developmental profile of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Like an intellectual politician, Omar Abdullah should work to change the profile, destiny and picture of Jammu and Kashmir. Maybe people around you will not show you the mirror, but we will definitely show you the mirror that your government's existence is not visible at the ground level," he said.

The BJP leader alleged that corruption remains a concern in the present dispensation and claimed that even NC legislators had raised such issues before the party leadership.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.com

Dr Shahid Iqbal reviews NMJK campaign progress in Rajouri

KT NEWS DESK

Rajouri, June 16: Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, who is also District Mentor under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) on Tuesday reviewed the progress achieved under the ongoing 100 day Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir (NMJK) Campaign during a meeting held here.

Dr. Shahid Iqbal stressed the need for active youth engagement, robust data management and continuous monitoring to ensure success of the campaign. He emphasized that the privacy and confidentiality of data related to affected individuals must be maintained at all levels. He observed that the 100-day campaign serves as a catalyst towards a larger objective and called for formulation



of long-term sustainable measures to effectively combat drug abuse.

Highlighting the importance of rehabilitation, Dr. Shahid Iqbal directed the concerned departments to ensure proper follow-up and tracking of individuals after treatment so that recovery remains sustainable. He underscored the need to transform the initiative into a lasting movement rather than a short-term intervention.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, presented a

detailed account of the district's efforts under the campaign. He informed that a comprehensive youth engagement strategy has been devised which is being implemented vigorously across the district. He elaborated on the mechanisms adopted for identification, counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of substance abuse.

The Deputy Commissioner informed that two de-addiction centres are presently functional in the district including one at Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri with a 20-bedded facility and another at the Old Hospital Rajouri. He stated that the systematic counselling services are being provided and day-wise analysis of cases is being conducted to monitor

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.com

J&K to play major role in India's 2047 goal: MP Khatana

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 16: Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Ghulam Ali Khatana on Tuesday said that Jammu and Kashmir is all set to play a major role in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing a press conference here ahead of the upcoming 3-day exhibition, "Rise in Jammu & Kashmir 2026" Khatana said, "The event will serve as a major platform to connect citizens with institutions driving the country's development and innovation."

The function is scheduled to be held from June 17 to 19 at SKICC in Srinagar. "The exhibition is a significant public outreach initiative to showcase India's developmental journey and the transformative changes taking place across multiple sectors."

He said, "It will highlight progress in infrastructure, science and technology, healthcare, agriculture, education, energy, environment, innovation and public service delivery."

Khatana said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, India is witnessing unprecedented progress across various sectors and Jammu and Kashmir is increasingly emerging as an active participant in the country's development story.

"The exhibition aims to connect citizens particularly youth, students, entrepreneurs, researchers and aspiring professionals with institutions that are driving national growth and innovation," he said.

He added the function "Rise in

Jammu & Kashmir 2026" will serve as a platform for creating awareness about flagship national programmes, technological advancements, scientific achievements and development initiatives that are contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

Khatana said the event reflects the spirit of inclusive development and public participation while encouraging greater engagement between citizens and nation-building institutions.

He said the exhibition will not only showcase India's achievements but will also inspire the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to contribute meaningfully towards the realisation of the Viksit Bharat vision. He added the event is expected to bring together some of the country's leading public sector enterprises, scientific institutions, government departments and development organisations on a common platform, creating opportunities for interaction, learning and collaboration.

The MP said the exhibition is expected to witness participation from several prominent organisations, including NHPC, BIS, ICMR, ISRO, CSIR, ICAR, APEDA, Northern Railway, IRCTC, CPCB, Survey of India, POWERGRID, HURL, NFL, NBCC, REC, NTPC, TRIFED, National Jute Board, NAFED, the Department of Atomic Energy and various other public sector undertakings, research institutions and government bodies.

He said visitors will have the opportunity to explore thematic exhibition

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.com

EDITORIAL

Time To Protect Children From Digital Poison

The world is finally waking up. Britain has joined Australia in banning social media for children under 16. Other countries, from France to Malaysia, are introducing similar restrictions. India is also debating the idea. This is not a war against technology but for our children's future. Social media was never designed for children. It was designed to capture attention, to keep users scrolling, and to sell advertisements. For adults, this is already

harmful. For children, it is devastating. Their brains are still developing. Their sense of self is still forming. Their emotional resilience is still fragile. Yet we hand them devices that expose them to bullying, unrealistic beauty standards, dangerous content, and endless comparison. The result is a generation more anxious, more depressed, and more isolated than ever before. The research is detailed. Excessive screen time is linked to poor mental

health, sleep disruption, reduced attention spans, and declining academic performance. Children who spend hours on social media are more likely to experience low self-esteem and loneliness. They are also more vulnerable to online predators, cyberbullying, and harmful content. The platforms know this. They have the data. But they have done little to protect children because protection does not generate profit. This is where governments

must step in. Australia has shown the way. Britain is following. India must not lag behind. The chief economic adviser has already called social media "predatory". We need action. A ban alone is not enough. Parents must also take responsibility. We cannot give children unlimited screen time and then wonder why they are struggling. Schools must educate students about digital wellness. Governments must enforce age verification and hold

platforms accountable. The technology exists. What is lacking is political will. Every day we delay is a day another child is harmed. We cannot afford to wait. The global movement is growing. India must join it. Our children deserve a childhood free from the poison of social media. They deserve to play outside, to read books, to have real conversations, to develop real skills. They deserve to be children. It is our duty to protect them.

Swasth Bharat, Sashakt Bharat – 12 Years Of Health Care Development

Stronger health systems lead to higher economic productivity, greater workforce participation, and sustained long-term growth. Good health is not only a social good but also a national asset – the foundation upon which human potential is built and national strength is measured. Every rupee invested in health is an investment in the nation's people.

Anupriya Patel

Stronger health systems lead to higher economic productivity, greater workforce participation, and sustained long-term growth. Good health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset – the foundation upon which human potential is built and national strength is measured. Health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset, and every rupee invested in it is an investment in the nation's people.

Thus, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) – ensuring that all people, regardless of socio-economic status, can access the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship – is not only a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030 but also a health priority.

India's National Health Policy 2017 (NHP 2017) is aligned with the goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG 3, guided by a simple but powerful belief – healthcare should be within reach of every person. Its four pillars – Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, and Availability translate that belief into action, anchoring a comprehensive continuum of care across all stages of life. Aligning with the goals, National Health Mission supports States in delivering an integrated three-tier model of health systems with a two-way referral linkages across rural and urban areas including vulnerable populations.

At the primary level, Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) provides comprehensive preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care health care services. eSanjeevani telemedicine platform ensures the availability of specialists connecting the community to the specialist through these AAM. And, a special Tele-MANAS platform, which has reached a cumulative 38.93 lakh contacts as on date.

Connecting from AAM are the secondary facilities at the Community Health Centre (CHC)/ First Referral Unit (FRU) and District

Hospital (DH) that serve as the first point of referral to provide in-person specialist and hospitalisation care, with tertiary institutions including medical colleges serving on the top of the apex to more complex and super-specialist service's needs.

This three-tier system is supported by escalation in Government health budget, with National Health Mission spending growing by 168% over the past decade, reflecting government's commitment to health as a national priority.

The journey of Ayushman Arogya Mandir represents a significant expansion of comprehensive primary healthcare and the much required transition from a reactive to proactive care. The expansion from 6 to 12 comprehensive health packages is a structural response to India's changing demographic and epidemiological profile. As we navigate the dual challenge of aging population with a rising tide of non-communicable diseases, the expanded scope covers Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), mental health, elderly care, emergency services, and eye, ENT, and oral health along with yoga and health promotion – reflecting a system designed for the population India is becoming.

As of May 2026, more than 1.8 lakh AAM are operationalised across country to provide door step healthcare services and the scale of this expansion is visible through more than 120 crore OPD consultations at AAM, more than 70 crore eSanjeevani teleconsultations, and more than 46.1 crore wellness sessions promotion good health and well-being.

At the primary care level, population-based screening for diabetes, hypertension, and common cancers oral, breast, and cervical targets all adults above 30 years, making early detection a routine. This screening is an integral component of service delivery under Ayushman Arogya Mandir, integrating NCD prevention into comprehensive primary healthcare. The expansion of NCD services is a multi-layered approach to early detection, prevention, management, and treatment. Dedicated NCD clinics, Day Care

Cancer Centres, Tertiary Care Cancer Centres, and State Cancer Institute's decentralised advanced oncology services and bring specialist care closer to the patient.

Also, whole-of-government approach is applied for preventive activities. FSSAI promotes healthy eating habits; the Fit India Movement drives physical activity; and the Ministry of AYUSH advances yoga and wellness. Sustained public awareness campaigns and Health Day observances reinforce these efforts. Prime Minister Modi's personal appeal to reduce edible oil consumption by 10% underscores a simple but powerful conviction: that the fight against NCDs is won as much in households as in hospitals.

To support the primary care expansion, a new cadre of Community Health Officers were introduced at the AAM level, bringing clinical and public health competence closer to the community. This expansion was mirrored at the doorstep, where the frontline network grew to over 10 lakh ASHAs – linking the community with the health systems.

Alongside expansion, India took on the harder challenge of transforming the standard of care itself. The National Quality Assurance Standards, indigenously developed and internationally certified, turned quality from an aspiration into an accountability. Over 65,000 public health facilities, including 54,926 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, are now NQAS-certified. Further, laboratory standards for IPHLS embed rigour into the system.

What made NQAS work was not the standard alone, but the ecosystem built around it – LaQshya for maternal and newborn care, Kayakalp for cleanliness and infection control, and MusQan for child health. Together, they have made quality a baseline rather than a benchmark. The result is a system that does not just treat more people – it treats them better.

If primary care is the system's first promise, targeted interventions like National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme

further reflects Governments commitment to reducing the OOPe across the country, with a cumulative savings of more than Rs. 10,102 crore to families who would otherwise have borne that burden alone.

Putting people's health into people's hands, India strengthened its community platforms – a deliberate, decentralised architecture that puts planning, monitoring, and accountability in local hands. Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs), Jan Arogya Samitis (JAS), and Rogi Kalyan Samitis (RKS) have made representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies active partners in health. In urban areas, Mahila Arogya Samitis (MAS) further deepen the focus by placing women at the centre of community outreach for transparency, accountability, and community voice for the trusted feedback loop.

True health security means being as ready for tomorrow's threats as for today's. PM-ABHIM, launched in 2021 with an outlay of Rs. 64,180 crore, draws directly on the lessons of COVID-19 – building surge capacity, strengthening laboratory networks, expanding real-time disease surveillance, and developing One Health research infrastructure. It is, in essence, turning hard lessons into durable public health architecture.

When illness does require hospitalisation, Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY provides the financial cushion that prevents care from becoming catastrophic to the family. As the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme, it covers Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care – a protection extended in 2024 to all senior citizens above 70, regardless of income.

Underlying all of these initiatives is a digital backbone without which a system of this scale cannot function. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission ABHA IDs, interoperable health registries, and unified health interfaces has made the records portable, access seamless, and delivery intelligent. Nearly 91 crore ABHA IDs have already been generated with India progressing towards digital health

systems.

Taken together, free services, community-level diagnostics, front-line specialists, referral transport, dialysis, hospitalisation cover, and a digital backbone do not add up to a collection of schemes – they add up to a system. The health gains are not accidental. They are what sustained, layered public investment looks like when it works.

The results are no longer abstract; they are visible in India's public health record. Maternal mortality has fallen from 254 per lakh live births in 2004-06 to 87 in 2022-24, meeting the NHP 2017 target. From 1990 to 2024, India cut MMR by 84% – nearly twice the global decline of 48% – and earned UNFPA recognition for leadership in maternal health and family planning. The broader picture tells the same story: as per the latest NFHS, fertility has reached 2.0, institutional deliveries have risen to 90.6%, and full immunization now stands at 98.6%. These are signs of a system learning to prevent, detect, and respond. That is why India's elimination milestones matter: maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015, and trachoma as a public health problem in 2024 – making India only the third country in South-East Asia to do so.

This is the larger lesson. NHP 2017 set the direction, NHM built the delivery infrastructure from Sub-Health Centres to tertiary hospitals, and Ayushman Bharat gave that system its four working pillars: AAMs for primary care, PM-JAY for financial protection, PM-ABHIM for resilience and infrastructure, and ABDM for the digital backbone. Together—with free medicines, diagnostics, transport, and dialysis—they amount to more than a collection of schemes. They form a national health shield for our people, and a reminder that public health, when treated as nation-building, can transform both lives and the future of the country.

The writer is the Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals and Fertilizers

FTAs Building A New Trade Architecture For Viksit Bharat

Rajesh Agrawal

Achieving the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' requires sustaining a high rate of economic growth over the next two decades. India's massive domestic market is a vital engine for this growth, but relying on it alone may not be sufficient. To achieve globally competitive scale and true technological transformation, India is integrating deeply with the global economy through a network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). While WTO agreements provide the foundation for a rules-based global trading system, FTAs enable willing partners to pursue deeper integration in additional areas of interest, building on the WTO baseline. The 384 notified FTAs in force underscore their utility as critical drivers of economic integration and rule-making customized to partner countries. They are the institutional blueprint for securing crucial market access while protecting Indian businesses from the unpredictable winds of global geopolitical storms.

Access to global economic opportunities is also essential for Indian businesses seeking the scale to emerge as global champions. But the gains are not limited to large businesses; FTAs open vital windows of opportunity for start-ups, MSMEs, farmers, fisherfolk, and

Indian talent looking to monetize their skills on the world stage. The binding commitments cover tariffs, services market access, and transparent trade rules, delivering the certainty Indian businesses require to invest for the long term.

India's trade negotiation strategy has matured significantly, focusing on complementary economies that serve as primary export markets for goods and services. A key objective of recent FTAs is securing a level playing field for Indian exporters in vital markets like the EU, the UK, and Australia. This parity is especially urgent for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, and footwear, where Indian products have historically faced steep tariffs while competitors enjoyed duty-free access. India is also negotiating Trade Agreements with Canada, Israel, and blocs like the EAEU and MERCOSUR.

Services are central to India's export strategy and a core focus of its FTA negotiations. By locking in commitments on cross-border digital delivery, recent FTAs help drive investor confidence across the rapidly expanding Global Capability Center (GCC) ecosystem, tech startups, and digital innovators.

Beyond digitally delivered services, FTAs have allowed India to innovate at the

negotiating table, securing binding commitments that enhance mobility for Indian talent, especially its youth. Key achievements include mobility provisions and side-letters for students and professionals, frameworks like the India-UK Double Contributions Convention (DCC) to prevent dual social security taxation on temporary assignments, and mobility rights in niche areas such as yoga.

A hallmark of India's next-generation FTAs is the recognition of the intrinsic link between trade and investment. By providing access to major global markets while easing the import of key manufacturing inputs, this network combined with increasing demand makes India a highly attractive destination for manufacturing and investment.

Recent agreements go further by explicitly linking market access to investment outcomes. A prime example is the landmark India-EFTA agreement, which conditions market access for EFTA nations on a \$100 billion FDI commitment and one million jobs in India. The India-New Zealand FTA features comparable provisions, leveraging access to India's vast consumer market in exchange for long-term investment commitments.

Modern trade is no longer confined to tariffs; it requires navigating 21st-century

dimensions with an equal focus on rules, including Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and Trade Facilitation (TF). India's next-generation FTAs actively engage with these frameworks.

Product standards and other regulatory requirements frequently pose greater hurdles to market access than tariffs. Provisions for regulatory harmonization and cooperation within India's FTAs offer structured, institutional mechanisms to mitigate these barriers for Indian exporters.

Environmental and labour standards are emerging as potential barriers to trade, and not engaging with them is no longer an option. India's new FTAs build cooperative arrangements to address these concerns, but not in a manner inimical to Indian interests. They assure global partners that India seeks competitive advantages through genuine innovation and scale, avoiding a "race to the bottom" on standards.

India's FTA policy is not piecemeal or country-by-country. It intentionally targets complementary economies that together represent two-thirds of global GDP and 75% of global import demand.

Crucially, the negotiation of these FTAs relies on continuous stakeholder engagement

and a whole-of-government approach. This ensures trade policy is aligned with India's broader imperatives related to industrial development, innovation, and socio-economic progress, with agreements structured so that vulnerable sectors and populations remain protected.

Specifically, FTAs include robust provisions to ensure that opening the Indian market does not cause disruptive shocks to domestic stakeholders. Liberalization in vulnerable and strategic sectors is phased over an extended period to allow local industries time to adjust. Several key sectors, including agriculture, are excluded judiciously to protect MSMEs and farmers, while safeguard measures stand ready against sudden import surges.

The ultimate goal is a robust, synergistic, rules-based trading ecosystem covering the vast bulk of India's international trade. By developing deeply rooted investment and value-chain linkages, strategic FTAs will liberate Indian businesses to focus on what truly matters: expanding, innovating, and marketing, free from the friction of policy uncertainty and regulatory hurdles.

The writer is Secretary, Department of Commerce

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

Govt committed to responsive governance: Sakeena Itoo

Says public outreach remains integral part of transparent, accountable governance

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 16: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, on Tuesday met several public delegations and individuals at Civil Secretariat here and listened to a wide range of public issues and developmental concerns raised by them.

The delegations, as per an official statement, representing different areas and sections of society, apprised the Minister of matters pertaining to health-care services, education, social welfare initiatives, civic amenities and local infrastructure. Individual citizens also projected issues requiring timely administrative intervention and sought appropriate redressal.

Giving a patient hearing to all the representations, the Minister assured the visiting delegations and individuals that their genuine concerns



would be examined on priority and taken up with the concerned departments for necessary action. "Public outreach remains an integral part of transparent and accountable governance as sustained engagement with citizens helps in identifying and addressing grassroots issues effectively", Sakeena Itoo stated.

The Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to ensuring equitable development, efficient public service

delivery and welfare-oriented governance across Jammu and Kashmir. She stressed that coordinated efforts among departments are being encouraged to resolve public grievances in a prompt and effective manner.

The Minister also urged the officers concerned to maintain close coordination with stakeholders and ensure that developmental initiatives and welfare schemes reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and transparent manner.

Boosting Disaster Management Capacity

RRU signs MoU with J&K State Disaster Response Force

KT News Desk

Srinagar, June 16: Taking a step towards strengthening disaster preparedness and response capabilities in Jammu and Kashmir, Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), J&K Campus, Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Jammu and Kashmir State Disaster Response Force (JKSDRF).

The collaboration, as per a PIB statement, is aimed at bringing together the academic expertise of RRU and the operational experience of JKSDRF to enhance training, research, and capacity-building in the field of disaster management.

As per the signed MoU, both institutions will be working together on developing specialized training programmes for SDRF personnel, jointly certifying academic and training courses, and strengthening disaster management training centres across the region. "We will be collaborating closely in



organizing workshops, seminars, lectures, and short-term training programmes to promote knowledge sharing and professional development," the agreement noted.

The MoU further opens avenues for joint research initiatives and the exchange of faculty members, academic resources, and scholarly information, creating

opportunities for innovation and learning in disaster management practices.

The significant agreement was signed at the office chamber of A G Mir, IPS, DGP and Commandant General, Home Guards, Civil Defence and SDRF, J&K, in Srinagar.

Speaking about the agreement, officials stated that the partnership showcases

a shared vision of building a more resilient Jammu and Kashmir through better preparedness, skilled manpower, and research-driven solutions. By combining academic knowledge with field experience, RRU and JKSDRF aim to contribute meaningfully to strengthening disaster response and community safety across the Union Territory.

BOPEE conducts CET for MSc Nursing Courses

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 16: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (BOPEE) Tuesday conducted the Common Entrance Test (CET) for M.Sc. Nursing Courses for the academic session 2026-27 at Jammu and Srinagar Centres.

The test, as per an official statement, was conducted at S.P. College, M.A. Road, Srinagar, in the Kashmir Division and at Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, Jammu, in the Jammu Division, with a total of 447 candidates appearing across J&K.

To ensure smooth conduct of the entrance test, adequate arrangements had been made in collaboration with the respective College administrations and law enforcement agencies, under the guidance of Professor Minu Mahajan, Chairperson, J&K BOPEE.

The examination was conducted under the vigilant



supervision of staff from the respective institutions and no incident of misconduct or malpractice was reported.

The Chairperson, along with the Members, the Secretary, the Controller of Examinations and the officials of the J&K BOPEE actively monitored the Common Entrance Test at both the centres in Jammu and Srinagar. They thanked the staff members of the respective Colleges and the staff deployed under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioners in the respective District Headquarters for smooth conduct of the said Entrance Test.

Div Com Jammu reviews arrangements for annual Mela Kheer Bhawani Yatra

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 16: Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar chaired a meeting to review the arrangements for the conduct of the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela Yatra, to be flagged off from Nagrota, Jammu on June 20.

The Divisional Commissioner, as per an official statement, held a threadbare discussion on the arrangements to be ensured by the departments concerned. JKRTC was directed to provide an adequate number of buses and to coordinate the journey.

The Divisional Commissioner directed all departments to ensure robust arrangements for the security of devotees, uninterrupted electricity and water supply, sanitation, traffic management, medical facilities, tents and transportation. He emphasised that all departments must work in close coordination to ensure a hassle-free



experience for devotees.

Deputy Commissioner Ramban was directed to ensure arrangements at the langar facility where the convoy of pilgrims will halt en route to Kheer Bhawani temple in Tulmulla, Ganderbal.

A number of religious and community representatives expressed their views during the meeting and conveyed satisfaction and gratitude for the robust arrangements made every year. It was informed that around 7,000 devotees have registered for the annual Kheer

Bhawani Mela Yatra and will participate in the mela to be organised on June 22.

Among those present were Managing Director JPDC, Deputy Commissioners of Jammu, Ramban and Udhampur, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) J&K, SSP Jammu, SSP Security, SSP Traffic, Heads of Departments, senior officials of JKRTC, Tourism and Health, Joint Director Information, representatives of religious organisations, community leaders and other officers concerned.

SANJY-2026

DC Srinagar visits Yatra Transit Camp Panthachowk Finalizes arrangements for smooth conduct of upcoming annual Yatra



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 16:- Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Tuesday undertook a site visit of Yatra Transit Camp (YTC) at Panthachowk to oversee the arrangements being put in place for the Yatries expected to participate in upcoming annual Shri Amarnathji Yatra (SANJY-2026) set to begin in July.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, inspected various facilities and arrangements put in place for the convenience, comfort and safety of pilgrims expected to participate in the annual pilgrimage during their halt at the transit camp Srinagar. He reviewed the preparedness of different departments and assessed the overall readiness of the transit camp.

On the occasion, the DC was apprised that all necessary facilities including provision for drinking water, electricity, sanitation, public convenience facilities, boarding, lodging, bedding, KYC & RIDF registration counters, medical facilities, etc have been made available at the Yatra Transit Camp. The DC reviewed the condition and operational readiness of various facilities at the camp, ensuring that all arrangements were functioning effectively so that pilgrims do not face any inconvenience during their stay.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of seamless coordination among all stakeholder Departments to ensure a safe, seamless and hassle-free experience for the yatries. He directed the concerned Officers to maintain high standards of service delivery and ensure that all facilities remain fully functional throughout the Yatra period.

The DC directed maintaining proper cleanliness and sanitation measures, ensuring availability of water, uninterrupted power supply, medical facilities, and other civic amenities, besides strengthening facilities at Langars (community kitchens) to

provide wholesome meals to the pilgrims.

During the visit, the DC was informed that an adequate number of bathrooms, urinals, and mobile toilets have been established at the Transit Camp for the convenience of the yatries. He was also apprised that comprehensive sanitation and cleanliness measures have been put in place, with regular cleaning and maintenance being carried out in and around the camp premises.

Additionally, sufficient manpower has been deployed to ensure efficient management and upkeep of the facilities throughout the Yatra period.

Similarly, regarding water supply, the DC was informed that besides a dedicated water supply to the camp, standby water storage tanks with a capacity of 80,000 litres have been installed to cater to the needs of the visiting pilgrims at the halt camp.

While inspecting the arrangements made to ensure hassle free queue management at newly established registration counters for RFID and KYC registrations at the Camp, the DC directed the concerned to ensure all required machinery and electronic gadgets are functioning properly.

Regarding healthcare facilities, the DC was informed that adequate arrangements have been put in place for providing first-aid and emergency medical assistance to the yatries.

In addition, necessary measures have been taken for effective crowd management, traffic regulation and parking arrangements at the Yatra Transit Camp to ensure the seamless conduct of the temporary halt of pilgrims at the Srinagar camp.

The DC was further informed that two mobile ATM machines are being deployed at the venue for the convenience of the yatries.

Reviewing safety measures, the DC directed the Fire & Emergency Services Department to take all requisite fire safety measures at the camp and conduct a comprehensive fire safety audit of the Yatra Transit Camp.

Amit Sharma chairs Census review meeting in Kupwara

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JUNE 16: In a streak towards covering all districts of both the UTs, Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations (DCO), Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma along with Principal Census Officer (Deputy Commissioner) Kupwara, Shrikant Balasahab Suse Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex Kupwara to assess the progress of the ongoing House Listing Operations (HLO) being conducted under Census 2027 in the district.

During the Meeting, as per an official statement, in strategic Border district Kupwara, CPCO, Amit Sharma specifically cautioned public against Cyber fraudsters and criminals who want to dupe masses by fetching their vital information like Bank Account Numbers, Credit Card details, etc on the name of ongoing phases of Census 2027. He requested public to act as responsible and awakened citizens and counter all such challenges smartly and also report such instances to Police and Census Helpline of 1855 so that swift action can be taken against such criminals.

Initially, Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara shared a brief profile of the district with the CPCO regarding the preparedness and progress for Census 2027.

Reviewing the progress of Kupwara district, Amit Sharma appreciated its performance during Self Enumeration and the

IEC activities undertaken here. He stressed the importance of maintaining the highest standards of accuracy during data collection and directed enumerators and supervisors to ensure that every entry is recorded correctly and verified thoroughly. He cautioned that even minor errors or conceptual misunderstandings can adversely impact the quality of Census data and affect future policy planning.

The CPCO while mentioning Census 2027 as country's largest administrative and statistical exercise, forming the basis for planning, resource allocation and socio-economic development for years to come. He also directed Charge Officers to ensure that Supervisors undertake regular field inspections and conduct random quality checks instructed to intensify monitoring and ensure strict adherence to Census guidelines.

Special emphasis was laid on ensuring comprehensive coverage of migratory and seasonal populations during the ongoing Census exercise so as to meticulously track migration routes and collect details of all eligible tribal population and individuals.

Before culmination of the review meeting, Amit Sharma said the digital mode of data collection would enhance efficiency and improve the quality of information gathered.

Principal Census Officer Kupwara assured full administrative support for the smooth conduct of Census operations and directed all concerned officers to closely monitor field

activities to ensure timely completion of the exercise.

Later, Amit Sharma along with PCO Kupwara briefed the media regarding the progress achieved under the ongoing House Listing Operations (HLO) of Census-2027 in Kupwara district and highlighted the extensive preparations undertaken to ensure smooth, accurate and timely completion of the exercise.

He appealed to the public of Kupwara and overall public residing in UTs of J&K and Ladakh to fully co-operate with Census functionaries and provide accurate information, stating that reliable Census data serves as the foundation for informed governance, developmental planning and equitable distribution of resources.

The CPCO also reiterated that all the information collected during the Census 2027 is fully protected under Section 15 of Census Act, 1948 and assured that it remains completely confidential and cannot be shared with any agency or individual.

The meeting was also attended by Joint Director, DCO J&K, Arun Kumar; Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan; ADC Handwara, Javed Naseem Masoodi, Assistant Director DCO J&K, Vijay Kumar, Chief Planning Officer Kupwara, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Kupwara, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Lolab/Karnah, Charge Officers and other concerned officers who are associated with the ongoing Census exercise.

DC Srinagar visits Gurdwara Shaheed Bunga at Barzulla Baghat on Martyrs' Day of Guru Arjun Dev Ji



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 16: On the occasion of the Martyrs' Day of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Tuesday visited Gurdwara Shaheed Bunga at Barzulla Baghat to pay obeisance and participate in the religious observances held to commemorate the sacrifice of the fifth Sikh Guru.

During his visit, the DC, as per an official statement, interacted with members of the Sikh community, Gurdwara management and devotees present on the occasion. He conveyed his heartfelt message to the Sikh community and emphasized the enduring

relevance of the teachings of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, which continue to inspire generations to uphold the principles of brotherhood, humility, social justice and communal harmony.

Meanwhile, District Administration Srinagar had made elaborate arrangements on the occasion to facilitate devotees and ensure smooth and seamless observance of the event. Necessary arrangements pertaining to sanitation, drinking water, traffic regulation, parking management, fire safety measures and other essential services were put in place to enable devotees to participate in the religious congregation without any inconvenience.

'Yoga for Healthy Ageing'

Chief Secretary reviews preparations for International Day of Yoga on Jun 21

Mega UT-level event at SKICC with 4,000-5,000 participants

Yoga sessions at iconic tourist destinations to promote wellness, J&K's natural beauty

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 16: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday reviewed the preparations being undertaken across Jammu and Kashmir for the celebration of the International Day of Yoga (IDY)-2026, scheduled to be observed on June 21, 2026, under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing".

The meeting besides Commissioner Secretary, H&ME; Commissioner Secretary, Y&S; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare; Commissioner Secretary, School Education Department; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir was attended by Secretary, Transport; Secretary, RDD; MD, NHM; Director, Colleges; Director, Ayush and other concerned officers.

Deputy Commissioners and District SSPs attended the meeting through video conferencing.

Reviewing the preparedness for the event, the Chief Secretary took a detailed appraisal of the



arrangements being put in place by the Divisional Commissioners of Jammu as well as Kashmir and all the Deputy Commissioners regarding identification of venues, logistical arrangements and mobilization of participants. He emphasized the need for meticulous planning to ensure smooth conduct of the celebrations across the Union Territory. Stressing on showcasing Jammu and Kashmir's natural beauty and tourism potential alongside the message of wellness, the Chief Secretary directed the concerned authorities to

organize yoga sessions at prominent iconic tourist destinations across the UT, thereby promoting the spirit of yoga amid the region's scenic landscapes and encouraging wider public participation.

Earlier the Commissioner Secretary, H&ME, M.Raju threw light on the extensive prelude activities being conducted across Jammu and Kashmir to create awareness and encourage public participation. These activities, he continued, included yoga sessions, yoga at iconic locations, Samyoga programmes integrating yoga with other healthcare systems, youth-centric initiatives in educational institutions, Harit Yoga programmes promoting environmental consciousness, and community outreach campaigns.

He further gave out that 1,952 yoga-related events have been organized so far across the Union Territory, witnessing participation of over 1.31 lakh people, reflecting the growing enthusiasm among citizens

towards yoga and healthy living.

The Chief Secretary was apprised that as per the past practice Directorate of Ayush, J&K has been designated as the nodal agency for IDY-2026 celebrations. The department is coordinating with all line departments and stakeholders to ensure successful organization of yoga programmes at the Union Territory, district and grassroots levels.

It was divulged that trained yoga instructors from the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), New Delhi, are being deployed to facilitate mass yoga demonstrations during the countdown and main events.

The meeting was informed that the flagship event, "Yoga Sangam", will be held on June 21, 2026, simultaneously across the country based on the Common Yoga Protocol.

Moreover, it was given out that in Jammu and Kashmir, all 642 Ayush health facilities are being registered on the Yoga Sangam Portal launched by the Ministry of Ayush, Government

of India, to facilitate large-scale participation.

A mega Union Territory-level event will be organized at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Srinagar, where around 4,000 to 5,000 participants are expected to participate in the mass yoga demonstration.

The Chief Secretary was informed that mass yoga events will be organized at district headquarters, educational institutions, tourist destinations, healthcare facilities, Anganwadi centres and village-level locations to ensure maximum public participation.

Emphasizing the importance of the International Day of Yoga, the Chief Secretary directed all departments to work in close coordination and adopt a whole-of-government approach to ensure the successful conduct of the event. He stressed upon maximizing public participation and making the celebrations a mass movement promoting health, wellness and healthy lifestyles across Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister Sharma reviews Muharram preparations across Srinagar city

Calls for timely completion of essential works

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 16: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma on Tuesday undertook an extensive tour of several areas in Srinagar city to assess the arrangements being put in place for the forthcoming Muharram observances.

The visit was aimed to ensure that all the requisite civic and infrastructural facilities are made available to the public well in advance. The Minister was accompanied by MLA Zadaibal, Tanvir Sadiq, senior officers of the District administration and officials from various line departments during the inspection.

The Minister visited the interior areas of dal like Mir Bahari, Meena Bazar, Moti Mohalla, Batt Mohalla, Guochi Mohalla, besides Kathidarwaza, Madin Sahib, Tibetan Colony, Butt Colony and Mandibal. He took stock of the ongoing works and reviewed the preparedness of various departments responsible for providing essential services during the holy month.

During the visit, Satish Sharma conducted on-the-spot inspection of civic infrastructure and reviewed the arrangements related to street lighting, sanitation, drainage, drinking water supply, road connectivity, cleanliness drives and other public utility services. He directed the concerned departments to work in close coordination and adopt a proactive approach to ensure that all facilities are put in place in a timely manner.

The Minister also reviewed the preparedness of the Power Development Department (PDD) and the Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED). He emphasized the need for uninterrupted electricity and water supply during Muharram. He instructed the concerned officials to identify and address any deficiencies immediately and ensure round-the-clock monitoring of essential services during the observance period.

At various locations, the Minister interacted with the local residents, community representatives and members of Muharram committees, who apprised him of their concerns and requirements. He assured them that the government remains committed to facilitate the smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram and that all genuine issues raised during the visit would be addressed on priority.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Amarnath Yatra

security forces conducted a mock drill at the Chichi Mata Temple in Jammu's Samba district to assess response capabilities in the event of a terror attack or other emergency situation," the official added.

The exercise involved coordinated action by multiple agencies and focused on evacuation procedures, emergency response and crowd management, he added.

NORTH KASHMIR

Meanwhile, a large-scale joint security exercise was held in North Kashmir's Baramulla district under the supervision of the Army's 79 Mountain Brigade.

The drill brought together personnel from the Army, CRPF, BSF, Jammu and Kashmir Police, Special Operations Group (SOG), civil administration, Fire and Emergency Services and medical teams.

Officials said the exercise simulated a range of scenarios, including crowd mobilisation, misinformation campaigns, road accidents, stone-pelting incidents and casualty evacuation.

The drill tested command-and-control systems, intelligence-sharing mechanisms and rapid response procedures among participating agencies.

Security arrangements have also been reviewed at railway stations, bridges, culverts and other critical infrastructure in several districts. "Regular searches and area sanitisation drives are being undertaken as part of preventive measures," the official added.

To strengthen administrative coordination during the pilgrimage, the Jammu and Kashmir government has temporarily deputed 63 officers from various departments.

The officers will assist in managing logistics, pilgrim facilities, inter-departmental coordination and other operational requirements during the yatra.

Officials said security and administrative agencies are working in close coordination to ensure that all arrangements remain in place throughout the pilgrimage period.

Pertinently, the Amarnath Yatra attracts thousands of pilgrims from across the country every year.

Authorities have appealed to the public to remain vigilant and immediately report any suspicious activity or unattended objects to security agencies as preparations gather pace for the annual pilgrimage. (KNO)

Comprehensive arrangements

for the Yatra have been given special attention.

"The Yatra is longer this year and the administration has taken every possible measure, particularly from the security point of view, to ensure a safe and hassle-free pilgrimage," he said.

He said all concerned agencies are working in coordination to facilitate devotees and ensure the smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage. "We are confident that the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra will be very successful this year," Singh added. (KNO)

Focus on large-scale

identification of land for public infrastructure projects, progress in development initiatives, engagement of key technical personnel and other administrative measures undertaken by the Authority.

The meeting reviewed the status of major urban development projects being undertaken by SDA, including the proposed Satellite Township at Rakhi Gund Aksha, Bemina, development of commercial assets, housing projects and other infrastructure initiatives aimed at improving urban facilities in Srinagar.

Referring to the proposed Satellite Township

at Rakhi Gund Aksha and other upcoming housing projects, the Chief Minister underscored the importance of creating well-planned, aesthetically appealing and livable urban spaces. He stressed that housing development should incorporate adequate civic and social infrastructure, including schools, parks, playgrounds, shopping facilities and other essential amenities, while ensuring quality landscaping and attractive surroundings that enhance the overall urban environment.

The Board also discussed measures for strengthening institutional capacity of the Authority, formulation of recruitment rules, implementation of welfare measures for employees and steps for improving planning and development activities.

The proposal relating to revision and implementation of Srinagar Master Plan, preparation of zonal development plans, management of commercial assets, development of public infrastructure and budget estimates of the Authority were reviewed during the meeting.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah emphasized the need for transparent, efficient and sustainable urban development, directing that all projects be implemented in a time-bound manner while ensuring adherence to planning norms and public interest. He stressed the importance of strengthening institutional mechanisms and improving delivery of civic and urban services to meet the growing needs of the city. Chief Minister exhorted SDA to focus on large scale housing projects to address the housing needs of Srinagar city and also improve parking facilities in busy areas of Srinagar.

The board underlined the need for planned development of Batmaloo area and making Sangarmal Shopping Centre fully functional. The board also gave directions to develop the vacant land parcels near Sangarmal by taking up key projects at the site.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department, Anil Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, Shailendra Kumar, Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department Mandeep Kaur, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Vice Chairman, Srinagar Development Authority and other senior officers.

Vice Chairman, Srinagar Development Authority, Shabir Hussain Bhat, presented the agenda items before the Board.

Omar lays foundation

Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at Brarinambal, Srinagar at a cost of 12 crore, and the construction of a 2.5 MLD capacity STP along with laying of 3.95 kilometres of sewer lines at Chattabal, Srinagar at an estimated cost of 14.54 crore.

These projects are being executed under the Capex Programme by the Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED), Kashmir, under the Housing & Urban Development Department.

The Chief Minister said that strengthening urban infrastructure, particularly sewerage and wastewater treatment systems, remains a key priority of the government to ensure sustainable development and improved quality of life for citizens. He emphasized that the projects would significantly enhance sewage treatment capacity, improve environmental conditions and contribute towards the conservation of water bodies in and around Srinagar.

The Brarinambal project will upgrade the existing sewage treatment infrastructure to improve efficiency and cater to the growing wastewater management requirements of the city. The Chattabal project, comprising a new

STP and an extensive sewer network, is expected to provide improved sanitation facilities to the area and help prevent the discharge of untreated wastewater into water channels.

The foundation stone laying ceremonies were attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Habbakadal Shamim Firdous, MLA Khanyar Ali Mohammad Sagar, MLA Zaidal Tanvir Sadiq, MLA Hazratbal Salman Ali Sagar and Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Mandeep Kaur, besides senior officers of the department and local residents.

The projects are expected to play a significant role in enhancing Srinagar's urban infrastructure and promoting environmentally sustainable wastewater management practices.

CM discusses dev

(Pattan), Khursheed Ahmad Sheikh (Langate), Arjun Singh Raju (Ramban) and Ghulam Ahmad Mir (Dooru), who apprised him of various developmental needs, public welfare issues and constituency-specific matters.

The Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to the public representatives and assured them that the issues and concerns raised would be examined and addressed in a time-bound manner.

Rain, thundershowers

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that some areas were likely to witness brief intense showers, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds during the afternoon and evening hours. It advised people to remain indoors during thunderstorms and avoid taking shelter near electric poles, wires, old trees and other vulnerable structures.

Authorities also advised suspension of boating and Shikara operations on water bodies, including Dal Lake, during periods of thunderstorm activity due to the possibility of strong winds and sudden weather changes.

The weather office warned that hailstorms accompanied by intense showers were possible at a few places in Uri, Baramulla, Gulmarg and adjoining areas, as well as parts of Budgam, Poonch and Rajouri districts.

Meanwhile, the MeT department has forecast unsettled weather conditions across Jammu and Kashmir over the coming days.

For June 17, it predicted partly to generally cloudy weather with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds at scattered places across the Union Territory.

From June 18 to June 22, the department said generally cloudy conditions are expected with one or two spells of light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, hailstorms, lightning and gusty winds at many places.

The forecast indicates that weather activity may continue, though with reduced intensity, between June 23 and June 25. During this period, the region is likely to witness partly to generally cloudy skies with light rain, brief showers, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds at a few places.

The MeT department has urged residents, tourists, pilgrims and transport operators to remain updated about weather advisories and take necessary precautions, particularly in vulnerable areas prone to flash floods, landslides and shooting stones.

Officials said brief, intense showers at isolated places could trigger flash floods and mudslides, especially in hilly and mountainous regions.

The advisory assumes significance as thousands of tourists continue to visit Kashmir and preparations are underway for the annual Amarnath Yatra, with weather conditions expected to remain changeable over the next several days. (KNO)

Health Ministry amends

adhering to the revised provisions.

The Ministry said the amendment forms part of broader efforts to enhance patient safety and ensure the rational use of medicines. Public health experts have repeatedly highlighted the dangers of uncontrolled access to medicines, including antibiotic resistance, delayed diagnosis, drug interactions, and adverse health outcomes.

The latest amendment is expected to bring greater accountability in medicine dispensing practices while encouraging patients to seek professional medical advice before consuming prescription medications.

The notification has been issued under the powers conferred by Sections 12 and 33 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and is now applicable across India. (KNO)

Peace boosts

of livelihood for residents who for decades lived under the shadow of conflict.

"Before the ceasefire, shelling was a regular occurrence and life was extremely difficult. Today, tourists are visiting throughout the year and local families are benefiting from it," Ahmad said.

Residents credited the February 2021 reaffirmation of the India-Pakistan ceasefire agreement for bringing stability and creating conditions conducive to tourism and development.

"Over the past few years, we have witnessed a complete transformation. Earlier, people would leave their homes during shelling. Now, those same homes are welcoming guests from different parts of the country," said Abdul Majeed, a resident of Karnah.

Official figures indicated that more than 4.30 lakh tourists have visited border destinations in north Kashmir this year. Of these, nearly three lakh visited areas in Kupwara district, while Gurez recorded around 60,000 visitors and the Uri sector witnessed about 70,000 tourist footfalls.

Apart from Keran and Karnah, destinations such as Bangus Valley, Lolab, Machil, Teetwal, Tangdhar, Gurez and Tulail Valley are drawing increasing numbers of visitors seeking offbeat travel experiences.

Locals said the tourism boom has generated employment opportunities for youth and encouraged small businesses, including transport services, pony rides and hospitality ventures.

However, the rapid increase in tourist footfall has also created challenges.

Tanveer Ahmad, a resident of Keran, said improper disposal of waste by some visitors was becoming a concern.

"Tourists should avoid littering along riverbanks and scenic spots. Proper waste management is essential to preserve the natural beauty of the area," he said.

Visitors also highlighted the need for improved mobile connectivity and additional public facilities.

Officials said work was underway to improve infrastructure, including the construction of public washrooms and the formulation of plans for scientific waste disposal.

They said cultural events organised by the administration, tourism department and security forces had helped bring border destinations onto Kashmir's tourism map and attract visitors from across the country.

Meanwhile, a tourism portal and a tourism magazine aimed at promoting North Kashmir's tourist destinations and boosting border tourism were launched in Kupwara by the Indian Army.

Officials said the portal and magazine have been designed to showcase the tourism potential of North Kashmir and provide visitors with information on destinations, cultural heritage, adventure tourism activities, local traditions and travel experiences across the region.

The platforms feature several destinations in the frontier districts, including Keran, Machhal, Karnah, Lolab, Tangdhar, Gurez and Kupwara,

which have witnessed a rise in tourist arrivals in recent years.

"The objective is to create a comprehensive platform that highlights the unique attractions of North Kashmir and facilitates access to information for tourists planning to visit the region," an official said.

Officials said the tourism portal would serve as a digital gateway for visitors by providing details about destinations, accommodation facilities, local attractions and tourism-related services available in North Kashmir.

The tourism magazine, meanwhile, seeks to document and promote the region's scenic landscapes, cultural traditions, local crafts and emerging tourism circuits. (KNO)

J&K to sign MoU

the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) from infrastructure creation to service delivery, supported by drinking water governance and an institutional ecosystem for sustainable rural piped potable water supply. (KNO)

NEET re-exam:

public advisory warning candidates against fraudulent paper leak claims being circulated online.

Meanwhile, the Cyber Crime Branch of Ahmedabad Police reportedly arrested members of an inter-state cyber fraud network that was allegedly operating eight Telegram channels connected to examination scams. Investigators found financial transactions amounting to nearly 1.5 crore routed through fraudulent bank accounts and discovered that approximately 1,000 mobile numbers had been targeted within a month.

Authorities said investigations into similar activities are underway in several other states.

TEMPORARY MEASURE, SAYS NTA

Acknowledging the inconvenience caused to millions of legitimate Telegram users across the country, the NTA said the platform restriction is temporary and limited to the examination window.

Officials clarified that while access to the platform will remain restricted only until June 22, the message-editing restriction until June 30 will not affect users' ability to send or receive new messages.

The agency stressed that the measures were adopted only after intermediate remedies, including channel-specific takedowns, failed to adequately address the problem.

STUDENTS ASKED TO IGNORE RUMOURS

The NTA reassured candidates and parents that the security of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination remains intact and that the examination will be conducted as scheduled on June 21.

The agency urged students to focus on their preparation and avoid falling prey to misinformation circulating on social media platforms.

Candidates have been advised to rely solely on official updates available through the NEET website and verified NTA communication channels.

The NTA also appealed to the public to report any suspicious offers, paper leak claims, or fraudulent solicitations through the National Cyber Crime Helpline (1930) or the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

INTER-AGENCY EFFORT APPRECIATED

The agency expressed gratitude to MeitY, the Ministry of Home Affairs, I4C, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and police forces across several states for their coordinated efforts in protecting the credibility of one of India's largest and most competitive entrance examinations.

According to the NTA, the combined action of these agencies has played a crucial role in safeguarding the interests of lakhs of students appearing for the re-examination and maintaining public confidence in the examination process. (KNO)

PM Modi receives Slovakia's highest award



PTI
Bratislava, Jun 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Monday conferred with Slovakia's highest national award, The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class).
This is Prime Minister Modi's 33rd international honour.
President of Slovakia Peter Pellegrini conferred the award on PM Modi at a ceremony in Bratislava.
"Honoured to receive The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class) in Bratislava this evening. My

gratitude to the people and Government of Slovakia for this honour, which belongs to the 140 crore people of India. I dedicate this award to the enduring friendship between India and Slovakia," Modi posted on social media.
PM Modi called the award a testament to the warmth, trust, and affection that unite the people of India and Slovakia, and hoped that the honour would inspire future generations in both countries to continue nurturing their special friendship, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a

statement. The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class) is the highest civilian and military state decoration awarded exclusively to foreign citizens by Slovakia.
Modi is in Bratislava as part of his weeklong visit to Europe. It is the first visit to the European nation by an Indian prime minister.
Earlier, India and Slovakia elevated their ties to a comprehensive partnership and firming up 11 agreements to expand the bilateral cooperation in a range of areas such as migration, digital technology and defence.

Modi's 12-year rule 'significant chapter' in India's history: BJP

PTI
Guwahati, Jun 16: The BJP on Tuesday said 12 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government have marked a "significant chapter" in India's modern history.
In a statement, Assam BJP spokesperson Mita Nath Bora said the country has witnessed transformation across multiple sectors, including economic development, infrastructure creation, digital governance, financial inclusion, social welfare, national security, women empowerment, youth development and global diplomacy during this period.
"Over the past 12 years, India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world and has established itself as a leading voice in global affairs. India's

achievements are being recognised and appreciated globally," she added.
Bora said global appreciation of the country's progress reflects the confidence that nations across the world place in India's growth story and its leadership in shaping the future global economy.
"As India celebrates 12 years of transformative governance under Modi, Assam stands as a shining example of how visionary leadership under both the PM and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma can work together to create prosperity, opportunity and renewed confidence in the future," she added.
The state's achievements reflect the broader story of a resurgent India that is stronger, more confident, more connected, and increasingly respected across the world, Bora said.

Phase I of Census 2027 completed in 23 states, UTs

PTI
New Delhi, Jun 16: Phase one of the 2027 Census -- house listing and housing census (HLO) -- has been completed in 23 states and Union territories so far, a government statement said Tuesday.
A 15-day self-enumeration process is underway in Kerala and Nagaland, followed by a field operation starting on July 1 and continuing until July 30, it said.
The field operations for the phase commenced in Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday, and are already underway in Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Puducherry and Uttar Pradesh.
"Residents who have completed self-enumeration are requested to keep their generated self-enumeration ID ready and share the same with the enumerator during the field visit to complete the HLO process. Households that have not opted for self-enumeration will be covered during the physical house-to-house visit by enumerators," the statement said.
The Rs 11,718 crore census exercise, which is the eighth since Independence, is being conducted in two phases -- the first stage is known as house listing and housing census, while the second stage is the population census.
The housing listing and housing census, which started on April 1 and will continue till September

30, will systematically list all structures, houses, and households throughout the country to provide a sound framework for the population enumeration.
In a first, the exercise will be digital, with enumerators using a special mobile application to collect the information.
During the housing listing field operations, enumerators will physically visit each house and building and ask citizens 33 questions about basic facilities in their homes, information about the head of the household, such as name and sex, and ownership status, among others.
For the first time, citizens have also been provided a self-enumeration platform on a specially developed website where they can answer the notified questions, generate an ID and provide it to the field enumerator when they come for verification, saving valuable time.
Every state will have to provide a 15-day window for self-enumeration immediately preceding the month-long field operations during which enumerators will go door-to-door with their questionnaire to collect data.
The state and UTs can choose a period --15 days of self-enumeration followed by 30 days of field exercise -- between April 1 and September 30 to complete the HLO phase.

Govt places curbs on Telegram app ahead of NEET-UG re-test

PTI
New Delhi, Jun 16: The government on Tuesday temporarily restricted access to the Telegram messaging app ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, with the National Testing Agency saying the measure was aimed at tackling cheating rackets.
The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), acting on recommendations made by the National Testing Agency (NTA), has issued a direction under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, restricting access to the Telegram platform in India for a defined and limited period ending June 22, 2026 covering the day of the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination and its immediate aftermath.
A separate direction requires



Telegram to disable in India the message-editing feature for already-posted messages for a defined period ending June 30, 2026 addressing the specific structural feature through which the platform has been used to fabricate after-the-event "paper leak" evidence in respect of national examinations, the NTA said in a statement.
"Both measures have been taken in the interest of public order, in response to the organised use of the platform by cheating rackets to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination scheduled on 21 June 2026," the NTA said.

Slovakia's honour for PM recognition of global trust he has earned: BJP

PTI
New Delhi, Jun 16: A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Slovakia's highest civilian award, the BJP on Tuesday described it as "historic" and said it is a recognition of his welfare work in the country and the global trust he has earned.
Speaking to reporters here, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said the bestowing of the award on the prime minister has brought honour to the country.

"With this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been conferred a total of 33 highest civilian awards of various countries. These awards have been bestowed on him for the development work that he has done and the trust that he has earned -- not just in India but across the globe," the BJP MP said.
These awards have been conferred on the prime minister also for the work that he has done for the welfare of the country's people, including those who are poor, he said. President of

Slovakia Peter Pellegrini conferred the country's highest national award, The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class), on Prime Minister Modi on Monday during his visit to the country.
"It is a matter of pride for India. It is a matter of pride for 140 crore Indians. This award is not just for the prime minister, but for Bharat also. We congratulate the prime minister and all Indians," Patra said.
"Such awards are bestowed

in recognition of public welfare. The government under Prime Minister Modi has been functioning so well for the past 12 years with the mantra of 'vikas (development)', 'vishwas (trust)' and 'jan kalyan (public welfare)'," he said.
Slovakia's highest civilian award has been conferred on Modi at a time when he has set a record by becoming the longest serving elected Prime Minister of India, Patra said, adding, "It's a historic moment."

India's democratic systems have evolved organically since ancient times: LS speaker

PTI
New Delhi, Jun 16: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday rejected the idea that democracy is a foreign concept and emphasised that India's democratic systems evolved organically since ancient times.
Addressing a Youth Parliament organised here by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Birla also praised the Constitution-makers for granting women the right to vote since the inception of the Republic.



A major focal point of Birla's address was the shifting landscape of grassroots and national governance, including participation of women in local bodies, which has reached a historic 50 per cent across several states.
Birla hailed the landmark women's reservation bill as a decisive turning point that will permanently solidify and mirror the grassroots success within the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies.
Reminding the young participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds that the onus of building a 'Viksit Bharat' rests on their shoulders, the speaker called on them to channel their innovation into public service.

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Irshad Ahmad Hajam S/o: Gh Mohd Hajam R/o: Duroo Tehsil Dangerpora.

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Son namely Momin Irshad s/o: Irshad Ahmad Hajam as 30-06-2018 at Sopore Nursing Home.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Farooq Ahmad Mir S/o: Abdul Rashid Mir R/o: Brath Kalan.

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Zarka Farooq D/o: Farooq Ahmad Mir as 22-10-2021 at Mother & Child Hospital Sopore.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

Government of Jammu and Kashmir, OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE BANDIPORA. PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Updation, Rationalization and De-weeding of Records of Industrial Units Registered/Assisted by District Industries Centre, Bandipora All industrial units registered, assisted, financed, sponsored or otherwise recorded with the District Industries Centre (DEC), Bandipora since its inception and are located outside Industrial Estates are hereby informed that the Department is undertaking an exercise for updation, rationalization and de-weeding of records/database pertaining to industrial units in the District.

It is pertinent to mention that, in terms of Government of India Notification No. S.O. 2 1 19(E) dated 26.06.2020 issued by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, all enterprises registered under EM-11/JAM were required to migrate to the Udyam Registration system. The validity of registrations existing prior to 30.06.2020 continued only up to 31.03.2021. Consequently, enterprises which have not migrated to the Udyam Registration system cannot rely upon their erstwhile EM-U/LIAM registration as a valid MSME registration.

Accordingly, all industrial unit holders, including those already possessing Udyam Registration, are required to furnish updated particulars in the prescribed format to the office of the General Manager, District Industries Centre, Bandipora within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Units which have not yet obtained Udyam Registration are advised to obtain the same and thereafter furnish the requisite information.

The information to be furnished shall include the following particulars:

1. Name of the Unit.
2. Location/Address of the Unit.
3. Location/Address of the Registered/Administrative Office.
4. Line of Activity.
5. MC Registration Number and Date (SS/EN4-11EM-HAJAM, as applicable).
6. Udyam Registration Number.
7. Name(s) of Proprietor/Partner(s)/Director(s).
8. Mobile Number.
9. E-mail ID.

The duly filled and signed information may be submitted in the office of the General Manager, District Industries Centre, Bandipora or emailed at bandiporaindustries123@gmail.com within the stipulated period.

The present exercise is intended to identify active and traceable industrial units, update departmental records, and facilitate de-weeding of obsolete, duplicate, non-traceable and unverifiable records from the active database maintained by the Department.

Industrial units failing to furnish the requisite information within the stipulated period shall be classified as "Non-Traceable Units" and shall not be reflected in the active records/database of the Department for administrative, statistical and other departmental purposes. However, such classification shall not preclude the concerned unit holder from approaching this office subsequently with the requisite information and supporting documents, hereupon the status of the unit may be reviewed and the departmental records updated, if found appropriate.

DIPK-2222/26
DATED: 16-06-2026

General Manager District Industries Centre, Bandipora

Trump says Iran deal going to 'second stage'

AFP/REUTERS

Tehran/Evian (France), Jun 16: US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the Iran deal was going to a second stage, and that the US would not be investing any money in Iran.

"We have our deal done with Iran, and it should be successful, it goes to a second stage, which I think would be actually easier," said Trump, speaking to reporters at the G7 summit in France.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that talks with the US on a final agreement covering Tehran's nuclear program will likely begin on Friday. "Likely on Friday, at a location to be determined ... a new round of negotiations between Iran and the United States to reach a final agreement will begin," Araghchi said in a briefing with foreign diplomats broadcast on state television.

US Vice President JD Vance told Fox News on Monday that Trump may decide to release Washington's agreement with Tehran before Friday. The agreement, which was electronically signed by leaders in the US and Iran, is expected to be signed in person on Friday. Trump on Monday said an agreement with Iran has been signed and that the text of the deal would be released sometime after a formal signing on Friday, adding that the Strait of Hormuz would also be fully open.

"The deal's all signed. And the Strait is already partially opened, as you know," Trump told reporters



shortly after arriving in Evian, France. "On Friday, it'll be completely open."

Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf will be present for the signing of an interim agreement to end the war with the US, an Iranian deputy foreign minister said on Tuesday, according to Tasnim news agency.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi said it remained unclear where exactly the signing would take place and in what format it would be conducted.

Vance on Monday said the agreement had been signed digitally on Sunday and that no funds were released. Asked when the text of the memorandum of understanding would be made public, Trump said: "Probably pretty soon. I would say after sometime after Friday ... I think sometime in the very near future." Trump said any sanctions

relief for Tehran was "really a behavioral thing. If they do what they're supposed to do, that starts taking effect."

Vance said that no funds would be released to Iran in exchange for signing an agreement to halt the war and open the Strait of Hormuz and that text of the framework deal would be shared this week.

In an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America" program, Vance said signing the memorandum of understanding with Iran would not trigger the release of frozen assets.

Vance said the agreement was already signed digitally on Sunday and no funds were released.

"There's been no money released, and that won't change," he said.

Vance said Iran would receive money only if it took verified steps to eliminate its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. "If we

see the Iranians making, for example, taking action to eliminate their stockpile of enriched material, then yes, sanctions relief will follow. If we see the Iranians taking action to allow the kind of verification regime that we need to see to know that they're not going to build a nuclear weapon, yes, sanctions relief will follow," he said.

"If they don't do the right things, if they don't allow the verification regime, they're never going to have the money to rebuild their nuclear program to begin with."

In an interview on CNBC on Monday, Vance also said the United States expects the economically vital waterway would be open without tolls. "Our expectation is that the Strait is going to be opened in a toll-free way for the long-term," he said. "That's the sort of thing that we're going to figure out in these technical negotiations. You know that there are a lot of very important details to figure out that we're actually going to sit at the table and discuss together and figure out a path forward."

The US and Iran said they had agreed terms to end their war and reopen the strait, news that brought relief to markets, although the pact may hinge on an end to hostilities in Lebanon and defers talks on Tehran's nuclear program.

While still a framework, the deal marked the biggest breakthrough toward resolving the conflict that has killed thousands and upended energy markets since it began with joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February.

IEA says 'unconditionally' re-opening Hormuz vital to end energy crisis

AFP/REUTERS

Paris, Jun 16: The head of the International Energy Agency said Tuesday that "unconditionally" opening the Strait of Hormuz to Gulf tanker traffic was essential to ending the shock from soaring oil and gas prices to economies worldwide.

"The single most important solution to this problem is the fully and unconditionally opening up of the state of Hormuz to shipping," IEA chief Fatih Birol told a press conference.

Iran had effectively halted tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes launched in late February, choking off oil and gas traffic and sending crude prices skyrocketing.

Three Iranian tankers and two vessels carrying essential goods are currently sailing toward Iranian southern ports from the Indian Ocean, Iranian state TV said on

Tuesday, despite a US military advisory note saying on Monday that a blockade of Iranian ports remains in effect until Friday.

The deal between Iran and the United States to end the Middle East war calls for the strait to be opened, but Iranian officials have said tolls or "service fees" could be imposed for ships passing through the crucial channel for Gulf oil and gas.

Birol "warmly" welcomed the deal, calling it "great news" that "will give a comfort to the markets."

"The crisis has started almost four months now," the IEA chief, who has previously compared the fallout to the great oil shocks of the 1970s, pointed out.

The IEA has coordinated the release of hundreds of millions of barrels of oil from emergency stocks by its 32 member countries, and said in May that around 164 million barrels have already been drawn.

Rohit's presence in Indian ODI team very imp, says Bahutule



PTI

Lucknow, Jun 16: Rohit Sharma remains an important member of the Indian ODI team not just for his batting but also for his leadership abilities and experience he brings, which has a positive influence on captain Shubman Gill, spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said on Tuesday. The former India skipper's future in the ODI format and his preparations for the 2027 World Cup have been major talking points since he and Virat Kohli bid adieu to the Test format last year.

Rohit has endured a lean run in the format, scoring just 77 runs in his last four ODI innings.

"Rohit Sharma is an experienced player, he is a champion of cricket. He is somebody who adds value to this team with his experience not

only batting wise but his leadership qualities also rubs on to all the boys with Shubman also," Bahutule told reports ahead of the second ODI against Afghanistan.

Bahutule said Rohit's understanding of the game and commitment to constant improvement remain undiminished despite his achievements. "Him being in this side is definitely very very important and he is somebody who understands each game, who understands what is expected from him and from the team."

"I think he is just been looking forward to every match and all the work he is putting in is like he has just started playing," he added.

Rohit, who got out cheaply in the opening ODI against Afghanistan, underwent an extensive nets session on the eve of the second match here.

Trump says Netanyahu should be more responsible with Lebanon

AFP/REUTERS

Tehran/Evian-Les-Bains (France), Jun 16: US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he has a great relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but that he must be more responsible with respect to Lebanon.

Trump, speaking at the G7 summit, said he told Israel that he did not like its attack on Beirut and suggested that Syria should take care of Hezbollah instead of Israel.

"If Israel can't do the job (against Hezbollah) without killing everyone else, than he (Sharaa) will do the job. Syria will do the job," Trump said at a G7 summit, praising Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa as doing an "amazing job."

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, was "the most important" issue in the peace deal with the US announced the day before. "The important point I want to emphasize here is that in our view, there are two parties to this memorandum — one side is America and Israel, and the other side is Iran and Hezbollah,"



said Araghchi during a briefing with foreign diplomats broadcast on state television.

"This is perhaps the most important issue in the memorandum — the declaration of an immediate and permanent end to the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon," he said, adding that "ending the war in Lebanon is an inseparable part of the complete end of the war."

His remarks came one day after Tehran and Washington announced a memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the conflict, which broke out on February 28 with US-Israeli

strikes on Iran and engulfed the Middle East. The deal between Iran and the United States is expected to be signed on Friday in Switzerland.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on Tuesday reaffirmed Lebanon's position in negotiations for a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, stressing the deployment of the Lebanese army to the international borders and the return of prisoners.

Lebanon was pulled into the war in early March when Iran-backed Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel after the killing of Iran's supreme leader, prompting Israeli strikes and a ground invasion.

Araghchi said an end to the war would not be complete "without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories it occupied in this war."

"Any military attack by the Zionist regime on Lebanon from now on and the continued occupation of Lebanese territories from now on will be considered a violation of the memorandum of understanding in our view," he added.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said his country's forces will remain in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza "as long as necessary."

The knock against Pakistan gave me confidence: Richa Ghosh

PTI

Leeds, Jun 16: Richa Ghosh shrugged off a prolonged lean patch with a match-turning cameo against Pakistan, and the Indian wicketkeeper-batter said the knock has filled her with confidence ahead of the next assignments in the Women's T20 World Cup.

Ghosh's 17-ball 34 was pivotal in taking India to a competitive 170, and to a thumping 64-run win over Pakistan last Sunday at Birmingham.

"I think the knock (against Pakistan) will help me really well because it gave me confidence," Ghosh said on the eve of India's match against the Netherlands here on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old said her fifty against England in a warm-up match also played its part in boosting her self-belief.

"I think I got the confidence from the practice match we played. I'm looking forward to the next matches," she added.

The Bengal cricketer was struggling for runs in the run-up to the ICC showpiece, having amassed 0, 6, 8, 4 before she turned it around with a 68 against England at Cardiff in a warm-up match.

"I'm just focused on my game. I was trying to work more on my drills etc at the nets. I was in good touch, but I was not getting runs."

Asian Games: Indian squads for three equestrian disciplines announced



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 16: The Indian squads for three equestrian disciplines were announced here on Tuesday by the ad-hot committee for the governance of the Equestrian Federation of India, ahead of the Asian Games.

The Asian Games will be held in Aichi-Nagoya prefecture in Japan from September 19 to October 4, with Three Day Eventing, Dressage and Show Jumping being the three events in equestrian.

"The Athletes (Horse/Rider combinations) have been selected based on the recommendations of the respective selection committees after going through the results posted by the probables

and as per the selection criteria for the Asian Games 2026," the committee said in a release.

Anush Agarwalla, who won the gold medal in team event and bronze in individual event in 2022 Asian Games, is among the reserves in Dressage.

Squads: Dressage: Shruti Vora (Magnanimous), Gaurav Pundir (Milli), Jai Sud (Goofy La Perla), Hriday Chheda (Dono Di Maggio). Reserves: Anush Agarwalla (Straight Horse Florianana), Sudipti Hajela (Biden).

Three Day Event: Ashish Limaye (Willy Be Dun), Ahaan Kumar (Boli-var Gio Granno), Arjan Nagra (Cooley Goodwood), Fouaad Mirza (Camouflage 38).

Movies Watchlist

Wednesday, 17th June

OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A)	DISCLOSURE DAY (ENGLISH) (U/A13+)	HAI JAWANI TOH ISHQ HONA HAI (HINDI ATMOS) (U/A16+)
11:00 AM	12:00 PM, 07:35 PM	
BACKROOMS (ENGLISH) (A)	MAIN VAAPAS AAUNGA (HINDI ATMOS) (U/A16+)	HAUNTED ECHOES OF THE PAST (3D HINDI) (A)
05:10 PM	12:50 PM, 02:15 PM, 07:00 PM	04:10 PM

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